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SOME LETTERS OF EDGAR ALLAN
POE TO E. H. N. PATTERSON
OF OQUAWKA, ILLINOIS,
WITH COMMENTS
BY EUGENE
FIELD

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CHICAGO
THE CAXTON CLUB

1898

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NOTE

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SOME LETTERS OF EDGAR ALLAN POE TO
E. H. N. PATTERSON OF OQUAWKA,
ILLINOIS, WITH COMMENTS
BY EUGENE FIELD

IN "Illinois in 1837; with a Map," published by S. Augustus Mitchell in Philadelphia in 1837, we find this interesting information: * "Oquawka, or Yellow Banks, is a town recently settled. It is situated on the Mississippi River, about midway between the Des Moines and Rock Island rapids, and is the principal depot for freight between those points. The town is laid out in two sections on an extensive scale. The soil is sandy; and the surface, gently undulating, is sparsely covered with a stunted growth of oaks, extending to the bluff, two miles back. Henderson River, a fine stream for milling purposes, passes along the foot of these, and is crossed by a neat and substantial bridge. There are two large warehouses in the town, one store, one grocery, two taverns, and several dwelling-houses. There is a good flouring and saw mill about two miles distant, and a steam mill is about to be erected. The site of this place was sold by the original to the present proprietor for \$200," etc.

Such was Oquawka in 1837; twelve years later Edgar A. Poe, the poet, author, and critic, not only

* Page 108.

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seriously contemplated publishing a pretentious national magazine in this town, but had even made preparations for that undertaking. The facts in the case are these:

J. B. Patterson came from Winchester, Va., to Oquawka in September, 1835. A year later, his wife, accompanied by their eight-year-old son, joined him. Mr. Patterson founded the Oquawka *Spectator*, a weekly publication still in existence. He was a man of fine literary taste and good literary ability; his life of Black Hawk is properly regarded as a standard history of early border times. The son, Edward Howard Norton, was reared most prudently; fond of reading, he was provided with the best books and with the choicest magazine literature. Under the discreet guidance of his parents, he was developed from youth into a manhood of unusual promise.

Young Patterson came of age on January 27, 1849. At that time his father handed over to him the management of the *Spectator* and of the job-printing office connected therewith. Full of ambition and of confidence, the young man had long cherished the determination to make for himself a place and a reputation in the literary world. Of the many figures conspicuous at that time in American literature he most admired Edgar A. Poe. In the *Southern Literary Messenger*, in *Graham's*, in the *Pioneer*, and in the *Broadway Journal*, he had read and was fascinated by the work of this remarkable genius. The reported adversities and distresses of Poe aroused in the young man a feeling of ardent sympathy, and, as

TO E. H. N. PATTERSON OF OQUAWKA, ILLINOIS

the twenty-first year of his age approached, he made up his mind to address Poe, with a proposition to come West and to embark with him in a new and, as he firmly believed, a feasible literary venture. He wrote to Poe upon December 18, 1848, and addressed the letter to Fordham, N. Y., that point having been designated by Mr. Putnam as Poe's place of residence. For a long time no answer came, but in April, 1849, the following letter was received from Poe:

New-York, April, 1849.

DEAR SIR,

No doubt you will be surprised to learn that your letter, dated Dec. 18. has only this moment reached me. I live at the village of Fordham,* about

* In a volume entitled "Echoes of the *A*esthetic Society of Jersey City" (Thompson & Moreau, New York, 1882) occurs an account, by Mrs. Martha J. Lamb, of a visit to Poe's house, at Fordham. From this paper I take the following pertinent extracts: "Fordham is an inconspicuous portion of New York City, a few miles north of Harlem River. . . . In less than 35 minutes the ride was accomplished. Then came a walk of nearly half a mile. We crossed the railroad track, and a wide, dusty street, and then ascended a picturesque hill, upon the very backbone of which stands the house where Poe wrote 'The Raven.' I scarcely know which struck me the more forcibly, its diminutive size or its quaint antiquity. The gable end is partially sheltered from the street by an aged cherry tree, and pear and apple trees of a former generation hover about on other sides, like sentinels on duty. The fence, which incloses both house and grounds, is lined with lilac and currant bushes. . . . 'This is the room where Mr. Poe did his writing,' she said. 'We have not been here long enough to fix up the place much. There are two rooms on this floor and two rooms above, but the house is full of little closets and nooks, and is more roomy than it seems.' She certainly did open doors in most unexpected places. . . . Two windows to the north opened upon an exceptionally beautiful landscape in summer, and a wide expanse of immaculate snow in winter; and two windows to the south swept the pretty garden and fields beyond. . . . In their season, the perfume of many flowers, and the music of birds and bees filled the air which fanned his brow. The chamber where Poe slept, and where they say his mother-in-law used to lock him up for days together, was up-stairs. It had a roofed

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14 miles from New-York, on the Harlem Rail-Road—but as there is no Post-Office at the place, I date always from New-York, and get all my letters from the city Post-Office. When, by accident or misapprehension, letters are especially directed to me at Fordham, the clerks—some of them who do not know my arrangements—forward them to West-Farms, the nearest Post-Office town, and one which I rarely visit. Thus it happened with *your* letter—on account of the request which you made Mr. Putnam, I presume, “to forward it to my residence.” I have thought it proper to make you this explanation, lest you may have been all this time fancying me discourteous in not replying to your very flattering proposition.

I deeply regret that I did not sooner receive it; and had it reached me in due season, I would have agreed to it unhesitatingly. In assuming “originality” as the “keystone of success” in such enterprises, you are right; and not only right, but, in yourself, almost “original”—for there are none of our publishers who have the wit to perceive this vital truth. What the public seek in a Magazine is *what they cannot elsewhere procure*.

Should you not have changed your mind on the ceiling, with a sharp point in the center (*sic*). At the east end was a high wooden mantel, with a small square window on each side of it, and there was a little one-pane window under the eaves, to the south. My eye fell upon the door, with its queer little old-fashioned panels, and last century’s latch two-thirds of the way to the top. . . . ‘That was Mr. Poe’s cow-house over there,’ said the young woman, pointing towards a little inclosure some six feet square in the side of the lodge.’

TO E. H. N. PATTERSON OF OQUAWKA, ILLINOIS

subject, I should be pleased to hear from you again. I do not think—(in fact I am perfectly sure of the contrary)—that a Magazine could succeed to any great extent, under the precise form, title, and general plan which (no doubt hurriedly) you have suggested; but your idea of the duplicate publication, East & West, strikes me forcibly.

Experience, not less than the most mature reflection on the topic, assures me that no *cheap* Magazine can ever again prosper in America. We must aim high—address the intellect—the higher classes—of the country (with reference, also, to a certain amount of foreign circulation) and put the work at \$5:—giving about 112 pp. (or perhaps 128) with occasional wood-engravings in the first style of art, but only in obvious illustration of the text. Such a Mag. would begin to pay after 1000 subscribers; and with 5000* would be a fortune worth talking about:—but there is no earthly reason why, under proper management, and with energy and talent, the work might not be made to circulate, at the end of a few years—(say 5) 20,000 copies—in which case it would give a clear income of 70 or 80,000 dollars—even if conducted in the most expensive manner, paying the highest European prices for contributions & designs. I need not add that such a Mag. would exercise a literary and other influence never yet

* Under date of January 18, 1889, Mr. R. W. Gilder, editor of the *Century*, writes: "The average circulation per month for the last four years of the *Century Magazine* is 212,000 copies."

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exercised in America.—I presume you know that during the second year of its existence, the “S. L. Messenger” rose from less than 1000 to 5000 subs., and that “Graham,” in 18 months after my joining it, went up from 5000 to 52,000. I do not imagine that a \$5 Mag. could ever be forced into so great a circulation as this latter; but, under certain circumstances, I would answer for 20,000. The whole income from Graham’s 52,000 never went beyond 15,000\$—the proportional expenses of the \$3 Mags. being so very much greater than those of the \$5 ones.

My plan, in getting up such a work as I propose, would be to take a tour through the principal States—especially West & South—visiting the small towns more particularly than the large ones—lecturing as I went, to pay expenses—and staying sufficiently long in each place to interest my personal friends (old College & West Point acquaintances scattered all over the land) in the success of the enterprise. By these means, I would guarantee, in 3 months (or 4) to get 1,000 subs. in advance, with their signatures—nearly all pledged to pay on the issue of the first number. Under such circumstances, success would be certain. I have now about 200 names pledged to support me whenever I venture on the undertaking—which perhaps you are aware I have long had in contemplation*—only awaiting a *secure* opportunity.

* Since 1843.

TO E. H. N. PATTERSON OF OQUAWKA, ILLINOIS

If you will write me your views on the subject—as much in detail as possible—and if they accord in any degree with mine—I will endeavor to pay you a visit at Oquawka, or meet you at any place you suggest, where we can talk the matter over with deliberation. Please direct your reply simply to New-York City.

Very Respy.

Yr Ob. St.

EDGAR A POE.

E. H. N. PATTERSON, EsQ.

Young Patterson's answer to this singularly interesting letter was dated May 7, 1849; the letter is lost, but at this moment the original memoranda from which the letter was drafted are before us and we transcribe them verbatim, as follows:

Oquawka, May 7, 1849.

DEAR SIR—

Yours of April is before me, and I hasten to reply. I feared that my letter had never reached you (*and had contempl.*), or that other engagements had prevented your replying. You ask me to give (*me*) you my views upon the subject of our present correspondence “as much in detail as possible;” this I shall proceed briefly and concisely to do. (*Your remarks, especially as they are strong.*) Your opinions, strengthened as they have been by experience, have had their weight in convincing me that it would probably be better to establish

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at the outset a high-priced, and correspondingly high-toned periodical, which would, without doubt, win a generous and extended patronage from a genius-appreciating public. When I wrote you before, I had not given the subject that consideration (*necessary to*) which it deserved,—my principal object at that time being to enlist your sympathies and interests in a periodical (*to be published by me*), the literary contents of which should be *exclusively* under your control, believing that such an enterprise would prove successful, not doubting that even a cheap Magazine, under *your* editorial control, could be made to pay well, and at the same time exert a beneficial influence upon American Literature. But I certainly think that a Magazine (*upon*) such as you suggest, would yield a handsome income—probably a “fortune worth talking about”—and also subserve the interests of Literature to a much greater extent.

Our Literature is, just now, sadly deficient in the department of criticism. The Boston Reviewers are, generally, too (*contracted in their views*) much affected by local prejudices to give impartial criticisms; the Philadelphia Magazines (*are*) have become mere monthly bulletins for booksellers; Willis does not, with his paper, succeed, *even tolerably*, as a critic; in fact, I seldom find any (*review*) critique so nearly according with my own idea of the *true aim* and *manner* of criticism as were yours, while you had charge of that department in

THE

STYLUS

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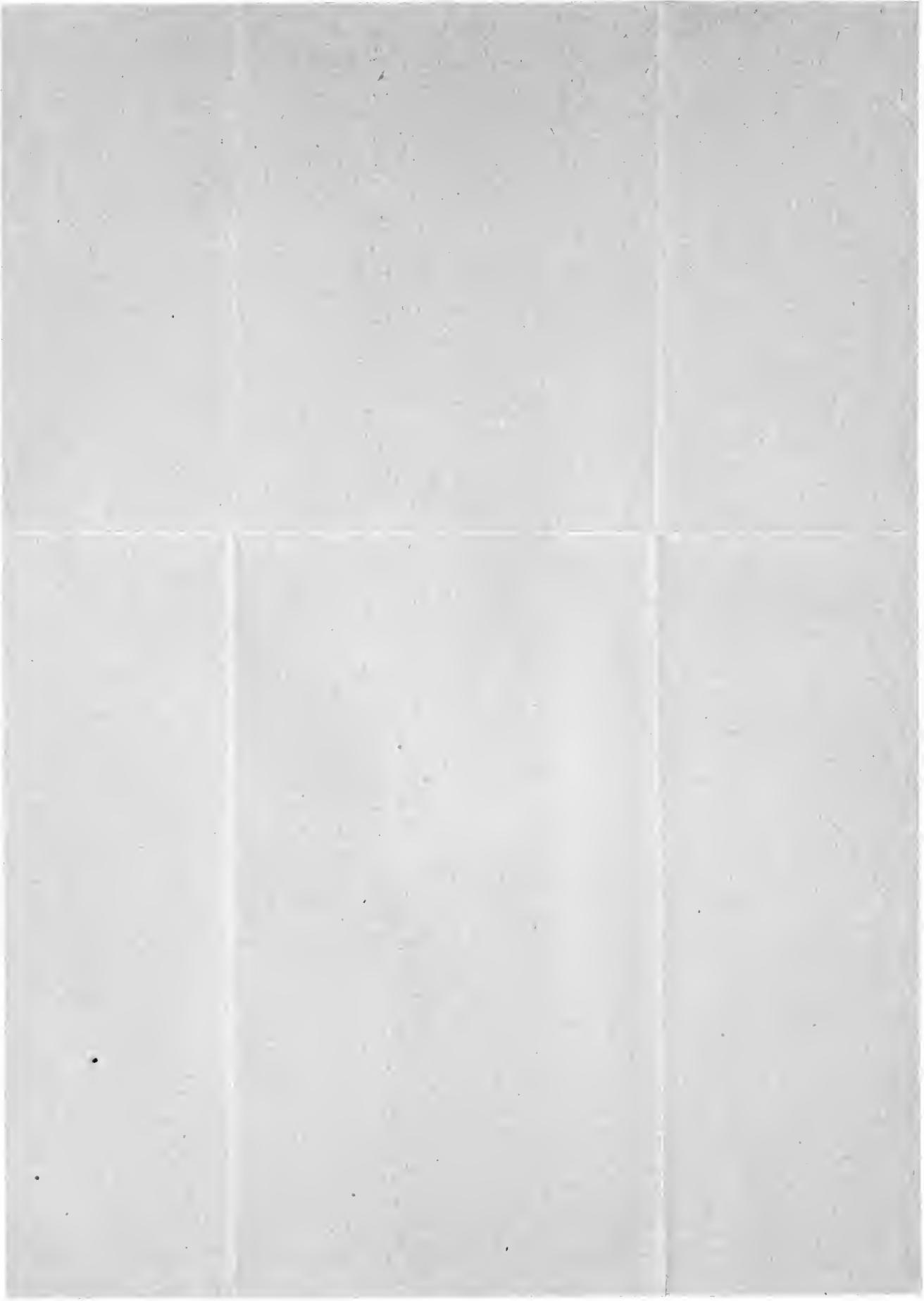
Monthly Journal of Literature Proper
The Fine Arts
And The Drama.



Aureus aliquando STYLUS, ferreus aliquando.

Paulus Jovius.

EDITED BY
EDGAR A. POE



TO E. H. N. PATTERSON OF OQUAWKA, ILLINOIS

Graham and *Burton's*. I wish (and am not alone in the wish) to see you at the head of an influential periodical, where you saw (*speak at*)—

As you do not appear to be pleased with the (*plan*) name suggested by me, I will leave to you the task of selecting an appropriate name, and would suggest that you make it unique—something that will be at once *taking* and will sound well. Make out a list of contributors and write a prospectus, and forward to me as soon as you can, so that I may at once commence operations—or, if it would be more consonant with your views, I will visit New York if possible by the first of August, prepared to purchase suitable materials to (*comm*) fulfill my part of the work, and then consult with you more deliberately upon *minutiæ*.

My plan then (with certain modifications which we may agree upon) is this:

I will furnish an office, and take upon myself the sole charge and expense of Publishing a Magazine (name to be suggested by you) to be issued in monthly numbers at Oquawka, Illinois, containing, in every number, 96 pages, of the same size of those of *Graham's Magazine*, on good paper and new bold-face long primer (*literary* critical reviews to be set in smaller type) at the rate of (*five*) \$5 per annum. Of this magazine you are to have the entire editorial control, furnishing, at your expense, matter for its pages, which can be transmitted to me by mail or as we may hereafter agree

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upon. (*The profits mine*) You can make your own bargains with authors whose contributions you secure, and I am to publish upon the best terms I can—each incurring the expenses consequent upon his own department—and we are to share the receipts equally—the books to be faithfully kept in the publication office at Oquawka, and one-half of all receipts from subscriptions, and private and agency sales to be forwarded to you monthly, by mail or as you may otherwise direct.

[*Upon another sheet.*]

If one thousand subscribers can be secured in advance (and I have your assurance that they can), I am desirous of publishing a Magazine of this character. Your plan for procuring subscribers strikes me as having been happily conceived, and from its very "originality," exclusive of your own extended personal popularity, must succeed admirably. On my part, I think my influence probably would extend to probably 500 subs., but I depend mainly upon your name, which (whatever may be the title you may propose) must form a part thereof. The fact of your editorship must also be well displayed in the prospectus.

Oquawka is comparatively an unimportant point, but I think that such being the case would not injure at all the circulation of the Magazine. Those who would become subscribers, would be induced to do so by their confidence in the abilities of the Editor, and

TO E. H. N. PATTERSON OF OQUAWKA, ILLINOIS

the names of the contributors—and after the appearance of the first number I would guarantee that none will be disposed to cavil at the style or manner of publication. Here I can, situated as I now am, do my work at a less outlay, do it as neatly, and enjoy every mail advantage that I could at St. Louis,* being but 30 hours travel from that city, and being situated immediately upon the Mississippi, with daily connection with the Northern Canal and St. Louis, and directly upon the great daily mail line from the East, through Penn., Ohio, and Indiana. In short, I could have no advantage in St. Louis that I may not avail myself of here—while here my expenses would not be so great as they would there, at least not in the beginning;—when the Magazine circulates five thousand copies it may be to our interests to publish it elsewhere—time will tell.

I have decided upon 96 pages—exclusive of cover; thinking that we had better begin with a work of this size. If, at the end of the first year, our circulation should justify, we can make a favorable impression as regards the stability of the work by enlarging to 112 pages or perhaps even to 128 pp.

I should expect you to be at one-half the cost of printing, say, 100 (perhaps a somewhat larger number) copies sent to editors in payment of insertion of prospectus.

* St. Louis, Mo.; the population at this time (1849) was about 70,000, or nearly one-fifth what it was declared to be under the census of 1880.

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If my plan accords with your views, you will immediately select a title, write me to that effect, and we will both commence operations. I will visit you at New York during the latter part of July or 1st of August, when we can settle minutiae and write out prospectus. We ought to put out the first number early in January next. Let me hear from you immediately.

And now that business is over—a word in your private ear. In conversing with a gentleman from Boston last year, upon the relative merits of some of our leading writers, I mentioned your name, and was surprised that he did not at once agree with me in my estimate of your poetic powers.* He confessed that he had read a review of some of your poems and concluded that they were scarcely worth his attention. He had not even seen the “Raven.” I lent him this, besides several fugitive pieces of yours in my possession—“William Wilson,” “Murders of the Rue Morgue,” &c., and afterwards “Eureka,” a copy of which (the last in the city) I had just a little while before procured in St. L. The *preface* of this work he said was sufficient, if

* Poe called Boston “Frogpondium.” Having been invited to deliver a new and original poem before the Boston Lyceum, he went to Boston and recited an old poem which he had composed in youth. When the Bostonians discovered that a trick had been played upon them, they were vastly exasperated. Forty years after Poe’s practical joke, an eminent Bostonian, invited to deliver a new and original address before a Chicago audience (the occasion being Washington’s Birthday), accepted the invitation and recited a lecture which he had written and delivered some years previously for the instruction and edification of the students of a Scotch university! In other words, Prof. James Russell Lowell played upon Chicago in 1887 a trick similar to that played by Edgar A. Poe upon Boston somewhat more than forty years before!

E. H. Potter Secy.

Quincy



Illinoian

Sept.



TO E. H. N. PATTERSON OF OQUAWKA, ILLINOIS

he had never read another word of your writings, to convince him that Edgar A. Poe was a man of gigantic mind. I was thus the humble instrument in removing for the [End of the Memoranda].

POE'S SECOND LETTER.

New-York—May 23—49.

MY DEAR SIR,

Your letter of the 7th. came to hand in due course of mail; but I have delayed my reply for a week, that I might deliberate well upon your proposition. You will comprehend the caution with which I feel it necessary to act, when you refer to my former letter, in which I endeavored to explain to you the ambition of my views and the importance I assign to *success* in the Magazine enterprise. If we attempt it we *must* succeed—for, so far as concerns myself individually, all my prospects, pecuniary as well as literary, are involved in the project—but I shrink from making any attempt which *may* fail. For these reasons, I have thought long and carefully on what you propose; and I confess that some serious difficulties present themselves. They are not insuperable, however; and, if we bring a proper energy to the task, they may be even readily overcome. Your residence at Okquawka (*sic*) is certainly one of the most serious of these difficulties; and I submit to you whether it be not possible to put

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on our title-page "Published simultaneously at New-York & St. Louis"—or something equivalent.

However, these are points to be discussed when we meet—for, upon the whole, I say *Yes* to your proposition. Enclosed, you will find a title-page* designed by myself about a year ago:—your joining me will, of course, necessitate some modifications—but the *title*, &c should, for many reasons (to be explained hereafter) be adhered to.

We will find the 7 months between now and January brief enough for our preparations. It will be absolutely necessary that we begin at once. To-day I am going to Boston & Lowell, to remain a week; and immediately afterwards I will start for Richmond, where I will await your answer to this letter. Please direct to me *there*, under cover, or to the care of John R. Thompson, Edr. of the "South. Lit. Messenger." On receipt of your letter (should you still be in the mind you now are) I will proceed to St. Louis & there meet you. We can then visit N. York together, or I can continue the tour, as may be agreed on. In the meantime I will do what I can in Boston & Virginia—with-out involving your name in the enterprize until I hear from you.

I fancy that I shall be able to meet the current

* This drawing, an exact facsimile of which appears in its proper place, is made with black ink upon pink paper. The vignette, clipped from the prospectus of the *Stylus* (which Poe contemplated publishing with Thos. C. Clarke, in 1843), is pasted upon the sheet.

TO E. H. N. PATTERSON OF OQUAWKA, ILLINOIS

expenses of the tour by lecturing as I proceed; but there is something required in the way of outfit; and as I am not overstocked with money (what poor-devil author *is?*) I must ask you to advance half of the sum I need to begin with—about \$100. Please, therefore, enclose \$50 in your reply, which I will get at Richmond.*

If these arrangements suit you, you can announce the agreement, &c to your friends & proceed as if all was signed and sealed.

I enclose a poem† from Willis's "Home Journal" and would be obliged to you if you could have it copied (with Willis's editorial prefix) in some paper, either in St. Louis or Oquawka:—enclosing me the copy when you write. Cordially yours,

EDGAR A POE.

E. H. N. PATTERSON, Esqr.

* Letter to "Annie," dated Fordham, June 16, 1849: "When I can go now is uncertain—but, perhaps, I may be off to-morrow or next day—all depends upon circumstances beyond my control. Most probably I will not go until I hear from Thompson (of the *S. L. Messenger*), to whom I wrote five days ago, telling him to forward the letter from Oquawka, instead of retaining it until he sees me."—Ingram's "Life of Poe," II, 216.

† The poem, "To Annie," concerning which, from Fordham, April 20, Poe had written to N. P. Willis, as follows: "The poem which I enclose, and which I am so vain as to hope you will like in some respects, has been just published in a paper for which sheer necessity compels me to write now and then. It pays well—as times go—but unquestionably it ought to pay ten prices, for whatever I send it I feel I am consigning to the tomb of the Capulets. The verses accompanying this, may I beg you to take out of the tomb, and bring them to light in the *Home Journal*? . . . I have not forgotten how a good word from you made 'The Raven,' and made 'Ulalume,' . . . therefore I *would* ask you (if I dared) to say something of these lines—if they please you."

[For Willis's "good word for 'The Raven,'" see Ingram I, 272.]

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POE'S THIRD LETTER.

Richmond July 19—

MY DEAR SIR,

I left New-York six weeks ago on my way to this place, but was arrested in Philadelphia by the Cholera, from which I barely escaped with life. I have just arrived in Richmond and your letter is only this moment received—or rather your two letters with the enclosures (\$50. etc.) I have not yet read them and write now merely to let you know that they are safe. In a few days—as soon as I gather a little strength—you shall hear from me in full.

Truly yours ever,

E. H. N. PATTERSON, Esq.

EDGAR A. POE.

POE'S FOURTH LETTER.

Richmond, Aug. 7. 49.

MY DEAR SIR,

The date of your last letter was June 7—so that two months have elapsed since you wrote it, and I am only just now sitting down to reply. The fault, Heaven knows, has not been mine. I have suffered worse than death—not so much from the Cholera as from its long-continued consequences in debility, and congestion of the brain—the latter, possibly, attributable to the calomel taken.

TO E. H. N. PATTERSON OF OQUAWKA, ILLINOIS

I have at length, however, been able to give your propositions full consideration—and I confess that I hesitate. “To fail” would be ruinous—at least to me; and a \$3 Magazine (however well it might succeed (temporarily) under the guidance of another) would inevitably fail under mine. I could not undertake it *con amore*. My heart would not be in the work. So far as regards all *my* friends and supporters—so far as concerns all that class to whom *I* should look for sympathy and nearly all of whom I proposed to see personally—the mere idea of a “\$3 Magazine” would suggest namby-pamby-ism & frivolity. Moreover, even with a far more diminished circulation than you suggest, the *profits* of a \$5 work would exceed those of a \$3 one.

I most bitterly lament the event which has detained me from St. Louis—for I cannot help thinking that, in a personal interview, I could have brought you over to my plans. I fear that *now* it is too late. But a Mag. might be issued *in July* very well—and if you think it *possible* that your views might be changed, I will still visit you at St. L. As yet, I am too feeble to travel; but by the time your reply to this reaches me, I shall have gained sufficient strength to set out.* It is not *impossible*, indeed, that, with energy, the first number might

* From the Oquawka *Spectator*, Sept. 5, 1849: “Edgar A. Poe, the celebrated poet, is now lecturing in his native city, Richmond, Va. His great erudition, added to his giant intellect and a most felicitous command of language cannot fail to render his lectures very popular.”

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yet be issued in January.* I will, therefore, await, in Richmond, your answer to this. Very cordially yours

EDGAR A. POE.

Immediately upon receipt of this letter, Patterson addressed to Poe the last letter† in this correspondence, as follows :

Oquawka, Ill., Aug. 21, 1849.

Edgar A. Poe, Esq.:

MY DEAR SIR,

Yours of the 7th inst. was received last night, and I hasten to reply. I am truly glad to hear that you are recovering your health, and trust it will soon be fully restored. You cannot enter into the joint publication of a \$3 Mag. with "your heart in the work." Well, what say you to this?—

In publishing a \$5 magazine, of 96 pp., monthly,—

* 1. "He was at this time" (1849) "absorbed in his cherished scheme of establishing his projected journal, the *Stylus*. Nearly all his old friends in Virginia had promised to aid him with the necessary funds, and he was sanguine of success. He intended to spare no pains, no effort, to establish this as the leading literary journal of the country.

. . . He would offer a more liberal price for contributions than any other publisher. This would, of course, demand capital to begin with, which was all that he required; and *of that he had the promise*. To establish this journal had been, he said, the cherished dream of his life, and now at last he felt assured of success."—*Scribner's Monthly*, March, 1878; "Last Days of Edgar Poe," by Mrs. Weiss.

2. "On no occasion had I seen him so cheerful and hopeful as on this evening." (Oct. 1, 1849.) "'Do you know,' he inquired, 'how I spent most of this morning? In writing a critique of your poems. . . . I intend it to be one of my best and that it shall appear in the second number of the *Stylus'*—so confident was he in regard to this magazine.'"—*Ibid.*

† Of the seven letters given herewith this is the only one that has ever before been printed. It is to be found in Gill's "Life of Poe," pp. 232-233.

TO E. H. N. PATTERSON OF OQUAWKA, ILLINOIS

page same size as *Graham's*—in bourgeois or brevier (instead of long primer and brevier, as first proposed), it would be necessary for me to make an outlay of at least \$1,100 (this amount including a supply of paper for three months for 2,000 copies). Now, if you are sure that, as you before thought, 1,000 subscribers can be obtained who will pay upon receipt of the first number, then you may consider me pledged to be with you in the undertaking.

If this proposition meets your approval, you may immediately commence your journey to St. Louis—making easy stages through the South and operating on your way—so as to reach that city by the middle of October (say the 15th), keeping me advised of your progress, as you proceed, by letter, say every two weeks. I will meet you at St. Louis, by the time mentioned, at which time I shall be more at leisure than before, and can then settle on arrangements. You may associate my name with your own in the matter, the same as if I had met you in person.

Adopt your own title. I leave this matter to you as belonging peculiarly to your department. (Remember, however, published simultaneously at New York and St. Louis.) The first number can be issued in July—it is now too late to do it in January, and it would not be advisable to commence at any time other than the beginning or the middle of the year. I will try to be at St. Louis on the 15th of October, if your answer

SOME LETTERS OF EDGAR ALLAN POE

to this be favorable; until which time I bid you God-speed, and beg leave to sign myself,

Most truly yours,

ED. H. N. PATTERSON.

P. S.—I send this via St. Louis and Vincennes, and will make a duplicate via Chicago to-morrow.*

Yours,

E. H. N. P.

Poe died at Baltimore, Oct. 7, 1849.† As Patterson admired and believed in him living, so he sought to do honor to him dead. He determined to publish his complete works, and with this object in view he wrote from Oquawka to John R. Thompson, editor of the *Southern Literary Messenger*, making inquiry after Poe's unpublished manuscripts, and asking information as to the last moments of the man whom he had hoped to benefit. Mr. Thompson returned a characteristic answer, as follows:

* 1. Pages 232-33 Gill's "Life of Poe."

2. "Chicago is built on a level prairie, elevated somewhat above the lake surface, and lies on both sides of Chicago River, about a mile above its entrance in the lake. The city has sprung up rapidly; it now contains about 26,000 inhabitants and is one of the largest grain depots in the Union. Its commerce is immense; the lumber trade is also becoming very profitable. Chicago is connected with the western rivers by a sloop canal, one of the most magnificent works ever undertaken. It is connected with Galena by railroad."—Colton's "Western Tourist," 1750.

† 1. From the Oquawka *Spectator*, Oct. 24, 1849: "Edgar A. Poe is dead. . . . The doings of the Supreme One are incomprehensible, and it is not for frail man to impugn His motives, else we might wonder why the lamented poet was removed so soon, and when he was upon the eve of realizing the cherished hope of his life! Arrangements had been made by which he was, had he lived, to be placed next year at the head of a large magazine, which was to be entirely under his control. This state-

TO E. H. N. PATTERSON OF OQUAWKA, ILLINOIS

Richmond, Va., Nov. 9, 1849.

MY DEAR SIR,

Your letter making inquiries of a personal nature concerning poor Poe has been lying on my table some days. I avail myself of the first leisure moment to reply to it.

My first acquaintance with the deceased was in the spring of 1848, when I accidentally learned that a person calling himself Edgar A. Poe had been, for a fortnight, in a debauch, in one of the lowest haunts of vice upon the wharves in this City. If you have ever visited Richmond, you may perhaps know that the business portion of the town and the sites occupied by residences exclusively are distant from the shipping by a mile and

ment may surprise many of his friends, but it is nevertheless true. We are personally knowing to the whole arrangement."

2. From the *Oquawka Spectator*, Oct. 31, 1849:

EDGAR A. POE.

His spirit, before it left this lower earth,
Often in the starry heaven, where it had birth,
Communed with saintly souls and caught
Many a golden vision, which it brought
Back from the Dreamland of its heavenward flight—
Then held the glittering fancy to the sight
Of those who, less poetic, vainly sought
To rival him whose soul was heaven taught.

3. In the *Oquawka Spectator*, Nov. 7, 1849, occurs what we believe to have been the first public defense of Poe after his death. This defense is a reply to an article in the *Saturday Gazette*, the latter paper having made this remarkable prediction: "With considerable capacity for continued mental labor, Poe produced no great works on which to build his fame; and the consequence is that, in fifty years, his reputation, like that of Denny, will be merely traditional!"

SOME LETTERS OF EDGAR ALLAN POE

a half, so that very few persons not actually engaged in commercial affairs ever visit the landing at all. As soon as I heard the name of Poe in this connection my worst suspicions were excited, and I at once took a carriage and went to seek him. It was a very warm day in the latter part of May or early in June. When I reached the purlieus of this abandoned quarter, I learned that such a person had indeed been there, drunk, for two weeks, and that he had gone a few hours previous, without hat or coat, to the residence of Mr. John MacKenzie, some three miles distant in the country, alone and on foot. It was Poe. The next day he called on me with Mr. MacKenzie. From that time until his death we were much together and in constant correspondence. I did all I could to restrain his excesses and to relieve the pressure of his immediate wants (for he was extremely indigent), but no influence was adequate to keep him from the damnable propensity to drink, and his entire residence in Richmond of late was but a succession of disgraceful follies. He spoke of himself as the victim of a pre-ordained damnation, as *l'ame perdue*, a soul lost beyond all hope of redemption. For three weeks previous to his departure from Richmond he had been sober—a Son of Temperance. But no confidence could be placed in him in any relation of life, least of all in antagonism to his fatal weakness. He died, indeed, in delirium from drunkenness; the shadow of infamy beclouded his last moments

TO E. H. N. PATTERSON OF OQUAWKA, ILLINOIS

And his soul from out that shadow
Shall be lifted never more!

But who shall judge harshly of the dead? Mercy benignantly tempers the divine Justice, and to this Justice we commit his spirit.

Poe had spoken to me of your design with reference to the literary enterprize of which you speak. You were fortunate, I think, in not having embarked in it, for a more unreliable person than he could hardly be found. I have not, as yet, recovered his trunk, so that I cannot tell you whether or no he left any unpublished mss. The day before he went North from Richmond, I advanced him a small sum of money* for a prospective article which he probably never wrote. His complete works will be brought out by the Rev. Dr. Griswold.

With much regard, I am, Sir, yours,

JNO. R. THOMPSON.

E. H. N. PATTERSON, Esq.

Ten years after the failure of this remarkable scheme to found a national magazine at Oquawka, Mr. Patterson went to Colorado, and there he lived to the end of his days. He was a singularly earnest and kindly man;

*1. "He was needy, and had asked Mr. Thompson for a loan of five dollars to help out his traveling expenses. As he was about to go, he turned to Mr. Thompson, saying: 'By the way, you have been very kind to me—here is a little trifle that may be worth something to you; ' and he handed Mr. Thompson a small roll of paper, upon which were written the exquisite lines of 'Annabel Lee.'"—Gill's "Life of Poe," p. 231.

2. "More than this, the *S. L. Messenger*, which owes me a good deal, cannot pay just yet, and, altogether, I am reduced to *Sartain* and *Graham*, both very precarious."—Letter to "Annie;" Ingram, II, 214.

SOME LETTERS OF EDGAR ALLAN POE

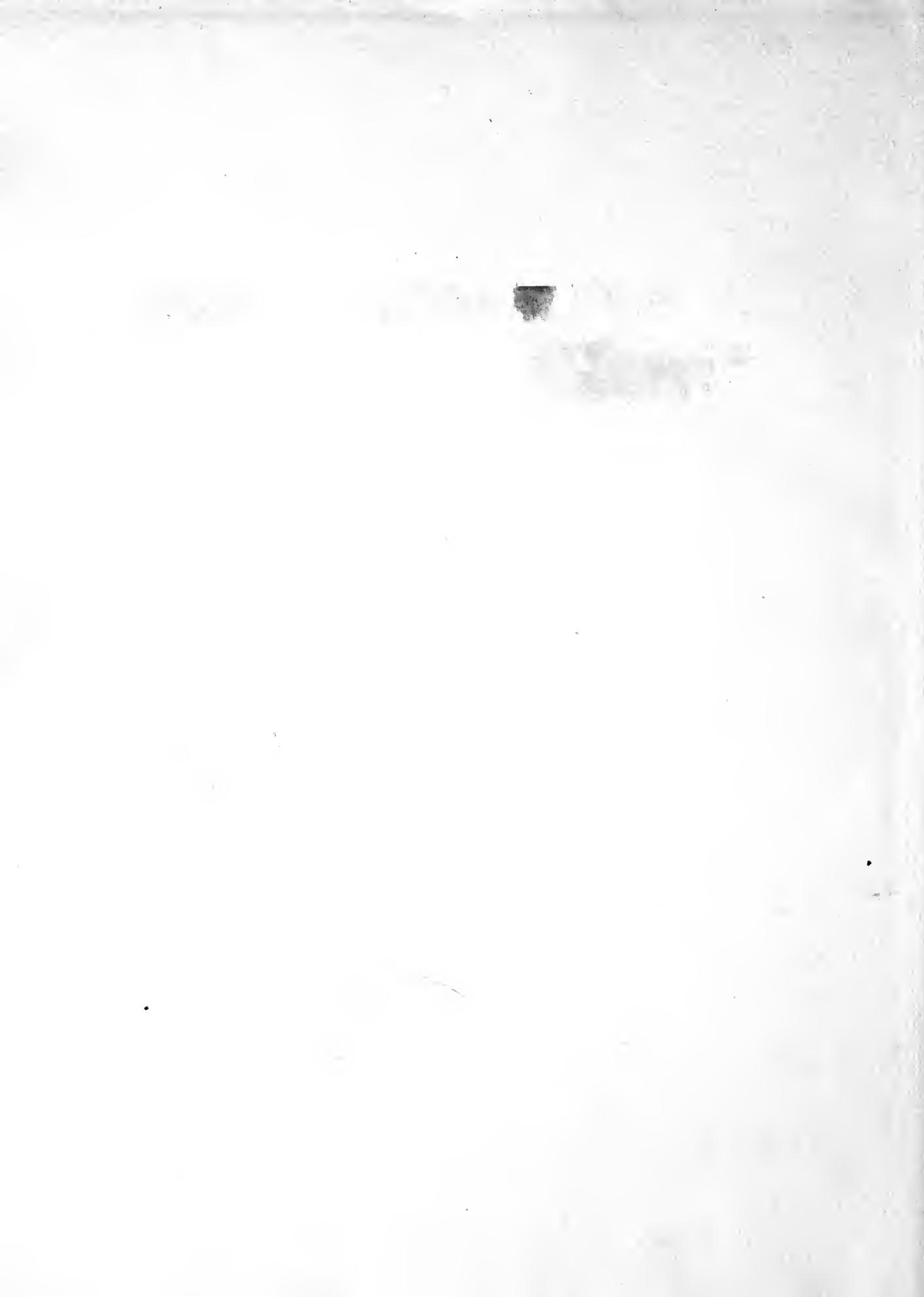
he loved to help the struggling, and, as he had stood ready to succor, to befriend, and to cherish the genius which the East had buffeted and trodden down, so through his life this noble man stood at all times against intolerance and injustice. Maintaining to the very last his fondness for literature and his sympathy for literary workers, he encouraged many a young writer with his friendly words and benefited many others with his prudent counsels and his timely charities. To the writer of these words—himself a Western man—there has never before come an opportunity more grateful than this wherein he is enabled to pay the tribute of his veneration to the memory of Edwin Patterson.*

Though leagues of arid plains, of mighty waters, and of rugged mountains separate the graves wherein the poet and his friend repose, is it not the sweetest promise of our faith that beyond the portal of death there is a soul-companionship, indissoluble and eternal?

* We find a mention of Mr. Patterson in the following "Lives" of Poe: Gill's, pp. 231, 232; Woodberry's, pp. 332, 341. In none of the other "Lives" is anything said or even hinted of Patterson.

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